



# THE BECKHAM OBSERVER

BECKHAMBIRDCLUB.ORG

P.O. BOX 5301 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40255-0301

JULY 2022

## JULY PROGRAM



He's been called "The Owl Whisperer" and "The Birdman of Cave Hill Cemetery," but most Beckham Bird Club members know Lee Payne as a fellow birder with an off-the-charts enthusiasm for the world of nature. The July meeting will feature Lee's presentation on the critters of Cave Hill, but especially the birds, and, most especially, the owls. You do not want to miss it.

Our meeting is on Tuesday, July 12 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 2822 Frankfort Ave, Louisville, KY 40206, 38.254256, -85.689458. St. Mark's is at the corner of Frankfort Avenue and Kennedy Ave. Please enter by way of the back door near the parking lot. Just

as a reminder Frankfort Avenue near the Louisville Water Company is under construction so you may need to find an alternate route.

## FIELD TRIPS

There are no field trips scheduled for July. The field trip schedule for August and September will be in next month's newsletter. The club is always looking for field trip leaders so if you would like to lead a trip, please contact Andrew Melnykovych.

## 2022 BBC BIRDATHON -WE NEED YOUR DONATION TO GET TO \$20,000.

Many members and friends have sent in their donations. Have you? Your donations are very important to the different groups BBC have accepted as recipients of our birdathon money. **NO AMOUNT IS TOO SMALL.** Make your check payable to **Beckham Bird Club.** Send your contribution to the post office box address: Beckham Bird Club, P.O. Box 5301, Louisville, KY 40255-0301. Otherwise send it to the person you sponsored. BBC has raised almost \$16,000 so we need your **help to reach \$20,000.** Thanks so much!!!

## PAST FIELD TRIPS

**Pope Lick – May 29** - BBC Field Trip. A dozen BBC members ventured out on a perfect late spring morning. Temperatures in the 50s and 60s, no clouds, no wind. Singing had fallen off quite a bit as birds have settled into nesting territories, but 53 species were tallied on the day, with most seen by all. Highlights were seven species of warblers, including all of the likely locals except Yellow. A late Black-throated Green made a brief appearance. A pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos gave good looks, as did a Yellow-breasted Chat. Missed on Baltimore Oriole, Northern Flicker and a few other common species usually seen at Pope Lick. Most unusual observation was a Rat Snake emerging from one of the nest boxes in the prairie area.

**Beckley Creek - June 5** - BBC field trip following annual picnic. Large group of 21 birders took an early evening stroll in warm, sunny and calm weather. Birding was a bit slow, but 36 species were tallied in just over an hour and a half. Highlights were nice looks at a Red-headed Woodpecker and an immature Summer Tanager. Lack of wind led to a sky devoid of raptors. Fun way to end the day, though.

**Bennet Lane and Morgan Conservation Park – June 11** -Five members and 1one guest ventured out relatively early to observe the sights and sounds of the grassland birds at Bennett Lane. For more than a month before the trip, many birders had been by there to view the Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Dickcissels and Bobwhites that frequented, sang, and made their nests in the grassy / weedy fields full of blooming wildflowers. Our trip's timing was unfortunate in that, despite pleas by local residents & birders with the Reformatory's new farm manager, the fields of wildflowers were mown a day prior, presumably to make low grade feed for the livestock that are raised on the property. Witnesses said there were many nests destroyed and many birds were seen in distress. Some of the observers were brought to tears.

When we arrived for our trip the next day, the fields had not yet been bailed and most of the species observed before the mowing were still present; albeit in lower numbers. We can only hope that some nests and recently fledged birds managed to survive. While we did not observe any recently fledged ground nesting birds or discernible females, the birds that remained did not seem to be overly stressed. Still, it was a rather unusual scene with the rows of sideways wildflowers. There were maybe half a dozen Dickcissels present and a one or two of them were singing on the fence lines and the few short weeds that had not been fully cut or trampled. A couple of male Bobolinks were seen displaying and chasing one another, while a few others were observed walking along on the ground in between the rows. No female BOBO were seen, but they are generally harder to observe. We were surprised by the relatively few Eastern Meadowlarks (2) and sparrows observed (1 Song and 1 Field in just over 1.5 hours traveling a half mile). As of 6/27, these fields had not yet been bailed, but the remaining Bobolinks, Dickcissels, and Bobwhites have left the area.

The trip was not all doom and gloom though. The weather was picture perfect and there were many great birds seen both at Bennett Ln and nearby Morgan Conservation Park. Highlights from Bennett included 18 Wood ducks (5 adults with 13 downy young). A Blue-winged Teal and a Pied-billed Grebe were also seen on the pond. Also sighted were Great Blue and Green Herons, a Belted Kingfisher, Red-headed and Piliated Woodpeckers, along with many Tree and Barn Swallows, American Goldfinches, and Red-winged Blackbirds. A scope brought into view a pair of Osprey and their nest on the distant cell phone tower overlooking the prison. 37 species were observed in all in just over an hour and half, in what is still a very special place for birds. I am hopeful that before next year's nesting season some inroads can be made, changes in farming practice suggested and adopted, so these fields can be productive for both humans and grassland bird species.

At Morgan conservation park, another human development was front and center as the large (former) agricultural field just south of the parking lot has been purchased and a large house built on the east end of it. This field appeared to have been mowed at some point this spring and was composed of some medium length grass devoid of the weeds (such as ironweed) that had provided habitat for Henslow's Sparrows and at least several species of butterfly. The gated field on the opposite side of the main road into Morgan was grown up and looked to be decent habitat, but we did not observe any Henslow's there this year. The rest of the park and its immediate surroundings appeared in similar condition to recent years.

Aside from the missing Henslow's and Bobwhite, bird species at Morgan were very plentiful. Highlights included great looks at a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 3 Broad Winged hawks calling and soaring above the forest, 3 species of Vireo, a pair of Blue Grosbeaks, and many Yellow-breasted Chats. Some folks needed to drop out before our party made it deep into the forest. Those that stayed were treated to many singing Wood Thrushes, Acadian Flycatchers and Scarlet Tanagers, all of which were occasionally glimpsed through the dense foliage. There were 7 species of warblers seen, including singing Ovenbird and Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Prairie Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat. We were surprised to find 6 pairs of Kentucky warblers, mostly along the stream. One Kentucky warbler pair provided some great looks and photo-ops. The Meadow Loop Trail was still hosting at least one pair of Blue-Winged Warblers, Chats, and Yellowthroats, but the forest succession (mostly cedars) has reduced the size of the meadow habitat by about half from ten years ago and I expect most of what meadow remains to be overtaken in the coming years, which may extirpate the Blue-wings from the park. We discovered the succession of trees and woody shrubs into the meadow has not reduced the number of ticks present on the trail, as a baker's dozen were removed after walking it. A total of 56 species were observed at Morgan Conservation Park, bringing the grand total for the day to 72 species! I greatly appreciate all of the efforts made by those who helped plan, and by those who attended, the trip and I hope next year's trip is even better!

## **BIRDING ETHICS: BIRDS NESTING – DO NOT DISTURB**

We've all seen birds nesting in close proximity to humans – American Robins setting up housekeeping on top of a porch light, Northern Cardinals in a bush right next to the back door, Carolina Wrens invading a garage.

In those instances, the birds seem to handle all of the human activity around them in stride. They may get irate now and again, flying off the nest in alarm, but they generally do not get sufficiently disturbed to abandon their eggs or their young. And, as long as you don't get too close, they will tolerate being photographed.

But that tolerance for intrusion is far from universal. It is the exception. Most birds are sensitive to human presence around their nests, and even those that seem unperturbed may be getting stressed by people in close proximity.

Those tolerant American Robins near your front door may have their nesting success affected by people walking by. If they flush from the nest, their eggs and young may become more susceptible to predation. If the parent birds are reluctant to approach the nest when people are present, the young might be fed less regularly, affecting survival.

Photography of nests is one of the most common human disruptions. So much so that, in some countries – Ireland, for example – it is illegal to photograph nesting birds unless you have been issued a permit by the country's wildlife protection agency. Ireland's national birding organization has published an excellent article on the reasons for the photography ban. It can be found [here](#):



[https://birdwatchireland.ie/too-close-for-comfort-bird-nests/?fbclid=IwAR0h5z33u84qhU7kxv\\_PkUlaLoKCrWP36NDR\\_GzDPLHIhTFnoZUswVFuMg](https://birdwatchireland.ie/too-close-for-comfort-bird-nests/?fbclid=IwAR0h5z33u84qhU7kxv_PkUlaLoKCrWP36NDR_GzDPLHIhTFnoZUswVFuMg)

The United States has no similar blanket restriction, although strict protections exist in some cases, such as buffer zones around Bald Eagle nests (more on these in a future newsletter). Disturbing nesting birds protected by the Endangered Species Act is also illegal, and photographers who do so can be prosecuted. Federal or state agencies that have nest colonies on their land also may have regulations

governing disturbance by photographers or other land users.

Even if the birds in question are not protected from disturbance by law or regulation, ethical birders will act in a manner that eliminates or minimizes negative effects on the nesting birds. The first of those is simply keeping a proper distance from nests and not lingering too long in proximity to the nest.

Photography also should be done at a distance, using long lenses; setting up a blind is another option.

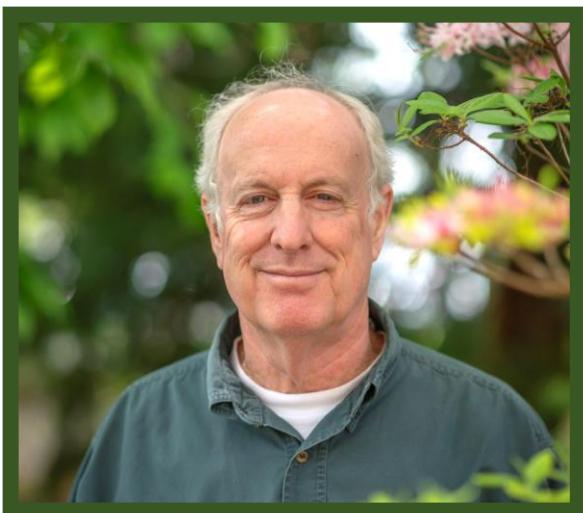
Renowned bird photographer Melissa Groo, who spoke at BBC's annual meeting a few years ago, has a number of practical suggestions for photographing nesting birds without imperiling the parents, young or eggs. They can be found here:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/dos-and-donts-nest-photography>

We watch and photograph birds because we love them. It's always a good idea to give the objects of your affection the space and time to just be themselves.

## Nature's Best Hope with Dr. Douglas Tallamy

### July 22 @ 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm EDT



Presented by Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest in partnership with the [University of Louisville's Sustainability Council](#).

Dr. Tallamy will be presenting via zoom to an in-person audience in the University of Louisville Bingham Humanities Building in the 100 auditorium. Recent headlines about global insect declines and three billion fewer birds in North America are a bleak reality check about how ineffective our current landscape designs have been at sustaining the plants and animals that sustain us. Such losses are not an option if we wish to continue our current standard of living on Planet Earth. The good news is that none of this is inevitable. Dr. Tallamy will discuss simple steps that each of us can – and must – take to reverse declining biodiversity, why we must change our

adversarial relationship with nature to a collaborative one, and why we, ourselves, are nature's best hope.

Doug Tallamy is the T. A. Baker Professor of Agriculture in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the [University of Delaware](#), where he has authored 106 research publications and has taught insect related courses for 41 years. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities.

His book [Bringing Nature Home](#) was published by Timber Press in 2007, [The Living Landscape](#), co-authored with Rick Darke, was published in 2014; [Nature's Best Hope](#), a New York Times Best Seller, was released in February 2020, and his latest book [The Nature of Oaks](#) was released by Timber press in March 2021. In 2021 he cofounded [Homegrown National Park](#) with Michelle Alfordari. His awards include recognition from The Garden Writers Association, Audubon, The National Wildlife Federation, The Garden Club of America and The American Horticultural Association.

Tickets for the event are available at:

<https://9619.blackbaudhosting.com/9619/Natures-Best-Hope>

Bernheim members \$20 Non-members \$25

UofL faculty/staff (with valid ID) \$10

UofL students (with valid ID) FREE, but must register

### **JUNE BIRDING**

June may have been a hard month to bird with temperatures soaring into the high 90s and even reaching a hundred and heat indexes even higher. Many of you may have decided to stay indoors while others ventured out to look for birds. According to eBird over 100 species were seen in the month of June. With the exception of a Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Swamp Sparrow there were no rare birds reported in June. Many resident and summer birds were busy with nesting and raising young. These young birds begin to wander to places that you might not expect – even into your backyard. A Black-and-white Warbler was seen at the East Point Park as an example of a young bird wandering. Many of our summer resident birds like flycatchers, vireos, warblers, etc. will be busy moving around feeding in preparation for their long journey coming up in the next few months. So don't let the weather deter you from going out and looking for birds as you never know what will show up just like the Brown Booby that was seen last month in Logan county. You might be the next person to find a rarity. Good Luck!!

### **NEW OFFICERS OF BBC**

At the June meeting new officers and directors were elected to the new year 2022- 2023. The board of Beckham Bird Club are: President – Andrew Melnykovich, Vice-president – Carol Besse, Secretary – Meg Brown, Treasurer- Steve Brown and directors for two years are Donovan Jones and Lee Payne. Jamie Baker will remain on the board as past president. Directors Karen Bonsell and Pam Spaulding will continue their terms of office. If you have question or concern, please use the BBC email address ([beckhambirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:beckhambirdclub@gmail.com)) to address the issue.

Thanks to Joanne Luyster and Pat Bell for serving on the board.